

# THE OBSERVER

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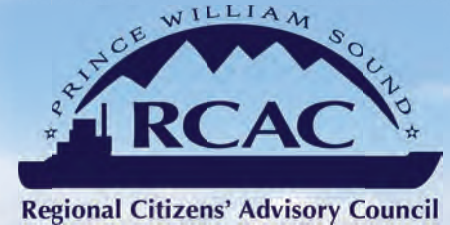


Photo by Cathy Hart Photography

Alaska State Chamber of Commerce - Chenega - Chugach Alaska Corp. - Cordova - Cordova District Fishermen United - Homer  
Kenai Peninsula Borough - Kodiak - Kodiak Island Borough - Kodiak Village Mayors' Association - Oil Spill Region Environmental Coalition  
Port Graham Corp. - Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corp. - Seldovia - Seward - Tatitlek - Valdez - Whittier

## New buoys now streaming weather conditions from Port Valdez

Two new buoys are now in place and broadcasting weather conditions in the vicinity of the Valdez Marine Terminal.

The buoys collect weather data such as temperature, wind speed, wind direction, and barometric pressure, as well as oceanographic information like surface current direction and speed, wave heights, and water temperature. This data will help improve understanding of the meteorological and physical oceanographic environment in Port Valdez.

### Terminal buoy result of cooperative partnership

The buoy closest to the terminal is the result of a partnership between the Council, the Prince William Sound Science Center, Alyeska Pipeline Service Company, the City of Valdez, and Valdez Fisheries Development Association.

"Partnerships like these result in collaborative science, which is the best base for providing answers to challenging questions related to planning an effective oil spill response," said Donna Schantz, Executive Director for the Council. "The Council has long advocated for this kind of data collection at the terminal and believe the information generated will contribute to best practices for prevention and response."

The partnership is a result of an agreement reached between the Council, the City of Valdez, Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation, Valdez Fisheries Development Association, Alyeska Pipeline Service Company, and the Alaska Department of Environmental



Real-time data from the buoys is available to the public from the Council's website: [www.bit.ly/TrackingWeather](http://www.bit.ly/TrackingWeather)

Conservation regarding protections in the Valdez Marine Terminal contingency plan for two nearby areas that are particularly sensitive to spilled oil: the Solomon Gulch fish hatchery and a salt marsh known as the



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## Upgrades at Valdez Marine Terminal improve safe operations

**By Austin Love**  
Council Project Manager

Over the past three years Alyeska has improved safety and spill prevention measures at the Valdez Marine Terminal's ballast water treatment facility. In 2012, the Council recognized Alyeska for major improvements made to the facility that significantly reduced the emission of hazardous air pollutants from the facility. These current improvements further enhance environmental safety.

Work to improve safety and spill prevention at the ballast water treatment facility includes:

- the demolition of one of the two crude oil recovery tanks;

- replacement of old carbon steel piping with new stainless steel and fiberglass reinforced plastic piping;
- new electrical wiring and conduit;
- total refurbishment of a number of valves;
- installation of new valve actuators;
- installation of two new recovered crude oil pumps;
- installation of roofs to protect equipment from snow damage;
- upgrades to the inert gas (nitrogen) system;

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## What is ballast water? Why does it need to be treated?

Ballast water is seawater taken on board an oil tanker to improve stability at sea. If the ballast water has been transported in an oily cargo tank, it must be treated to remove remnants of oil before the water can be released back into the sea. Over the years, the volume of water needing treatment at the Valdez Marine Terminal has been greatly reduced because the tankers now calling in Prince William Sound all have double hulls and far fewer tankers are visiting

the terminal because of reductions in pipeline throughput. However, severe weather encountered on the trip to Alaska sometimes requires extra ballast be carried in oily cargo holds, more ballast than can be contained in the clean, segregated tanks of a double hull tanker. That oil contaminated ballast is cleaned at the terminal's ballast water treatment facility prior to discharge into Port Valdez.



# Homer representative elected president of Council

The Council held annual elections to choose its seven-member executive committee at the May meeting in Valdez.

Robert Archibald, who represents the City of Homer, was elected as president. Amanda Bauer, who represents the City of Valdez, was elected as vice president. Bob Shavelson, who represents the Oil Spill Region Environmental Coalition, was re-elected as secretary. Wayne Donaldson, who represents the City of Kodiak,

was re-elected as treasurer. Three directors will serve on the committee as members-at-large: Peter Andersen, who represents the Chugach Alaska Corporation, Thane Miller, who represents the Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation, and Rebecca Skinner, who represents the Kodiak Island Borough.

These officers will serve until the next election in May 2020.



Left: New executive committee (left to right): Miller, Bauer, Archibald, Skinner, Andersen, and Donaldson. Below: Shavelson.



## New directors

Three new directors have joined the Council's Board.

Rob Chadwell replaced Orson Smith as the representative for the City of Seward. Chadwell is a professional mariner and is currently an instructor at AVTEC – Alaska's Institute of Technology. Smith remains a volunteer for the Council on the Port Operations and Vessel Traffic System Committee.

Conrad Peterson replaced Melissa Berns as the representative from the Kodiak Village Mayors Association. Born and raised in Old Harbor, Peterson has been a guide for Kodiak Sportsman's Lodge since 2003. He is also a U.S. Coast Guard-licensed captain.

Dr. Kirk Zinck is the new representative from

the City of Seldovia, replacing Alisha Chartier. Zinck, a lifelong Alaskan, is a licensed marriage and family therapist who holds a Ph.D. in Marriage and Family Therapy plus degrees in counseling and teaching.

Read more about our directors:  
[www.pwsrccac.org/about/members/](http://www.pwsrccac.org/about/members/)



Peterson



Chadwell



Zinck



From the executive director:

# Strong regulations are a result of hard lessons

The oil spill prevention and response system created for the Valdez Marine Terminal and associated tankers after the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill is one of the best in the world. Alyeska Pipeline Service Company and the Trans Alaska Pipeline System tanker operators have worked with regulators and citizens to continuously improve the system over the years. Industry safety records, coupled with the lack of significant spills in the past 30 years, point to the success of industry working within the current system. Credit is also due to the foresight of Congress for enacting the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, which included the creation of the citizen councils, and to the State of Alaska for implementing strong statutes and regulations. The Joint Pipeline Office was created in 1990 to coordinate efforts of the 13 different state and federal regulatory agencies with oversight responsibilities at the Valdez Marine Terminal.

One only needs to compare the prevention and response capabilities prior to 1989 to what is in place today to recognize the vast improvements that have been made. While the Council has had disagreements with industry over the years, there have been numerous examples of industry, regulators, and citizens working cooperatively and collaboratively to find solutions.

Over the past few years the Council has been seeing a steady erosion in regulatory oversight, staffing, funding, and coordination among many of the federal and

state agencies responsible for enforcing the strong laws and regulations. Agency budgets have been reduced, and personnel are being tasked with doing more with fewer resources. The Council wants to do everything possible to make sure the safeguards put in place over the past 30 years are not weakened.

Many of the people who worked so hard after the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill to make sure strong requirements were enacted are no longer with us or involved in the process. With the passage of time, we are losing historical knowledge and the lessons learned from those who experienced firsthand the devastation of the spill and who understood the importance of implementing strong requirements to make sure past mistakes are not repeated.

With this loss of understanding there is a shift in philosophy among some decision makers that the details in the oil spill prevention and response contingency plans, and the regulations that guide them, are unnecessary and distracting. Some of the details in the contingency plans have already been weakened or removed, and an effort to reform current oil spill regulations to make them less burdensome on industry is underway. It appears



Donna Schantz  
Executive Director

“The notion that safety can be ensured in the shipping industry through self-regulation has proved false and should be abandoned as a premise for policy. Alert regulatory agencies, subject to continuous public oversight, are needed to enforce laws governing the safe shipment of oil.”

- Alaska Oil Spill Commission Report (1990) *The Wreck of the Exxon Valdez: Implications for Safe Transportation of Oil.*

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To find out more about the history and legislative intent of Alaska’s strong standards, read the Council’s August 2018 report titled “Alaska’s Oil Spill Response Planning Standard: History and Legislative Intent,” by Nuka Research and Planning Group, LLC.: [www.bit.ly/AlaskaPlanningStandards](http://www.bit.ly/AlaskaPlanningStandards)



From Alyeska:

## Alyeska traveling health fair: Positive impact in the Sound

Alyeska's Traveling Health and Safety Fair spent four days in the Prince William Sound communities of Tatitlek and Chenega Bay in early June, marking the 21st year of the annual event. Eight health care providers from across Alaska, nine UAA pharmacy students and faculty, and a pair of Alyeska employees joined the crew of Edison Chouest Offshore's utility tug Ross Chouest, which transported the contingent on its five-day journey from Valdez to Tatitlek to Chenega Bay and back.

The group facilitated two full-day schedules of events each in Tatitlek and Chenega Bay. Both stops included a free health fair available for all residents, where they could receive basic biometric screenings and information on nutrition, healthy relationships, tobacco prevention, active lifestyles, and more. Throughout both days there were also hearing, vision, and development checkups for the community's kids and classroom sessions about mental health and wellness, first aid and handwashing, positive communication, and healthy food choices.

Each morning, health fair contributors ate breakfast with local youth at their schools. There were also special men's breakfasts, women's teas, and community dinners that packed each school's respective gymnasium, offering tasty and healthy menus that were headlined by Cajun-style shrimp and corn soup created by ECO Chef Chad Cavalier.

Local leaders and high school students also had the opportunity to tour the Ross Chouest, which provides a variety of services around the Prince William Sound area. Captain Carlos Alemany and his enthusiastic crew led visitors

around the unique vessel's deck, into its engine room, and other areas.

Even rare moments of downtime were filled with opportunities for health fair participants to encourage healthy lifestyles by playing basketball or jumping rope with local youth and assist in community projects like sewing tribal regalia, organizing donated library books, and prepping healthy snacks for school kids.

"The Prince William Sound Traveling Health Fair is the culmination of months of careful planning and preparation by Alyeska staff, contractors, and community partners," explained Kate Dugan, Alyeska's Valdez Communications Manager. "It was special to make the trip for the first time with Edison Chouest Offshore and the terrific crew aboard the Ross Chouest. The event is always an adventure and this year was no exception."



Chenega Bay students participate in health fair activities. Photo courtesy of Alyeska Corporate Communications.

Staff news:

## Long-time science manager retires

Joe Banta, project manager for the Council's environmental monitoring program, retired this past April. In 1990, Banta was the first project manager hired for the Council, serving for almost 30 years.



Joe Banta

In his early years at the Council, he managed oil spill planning projects for the Council's Oil Spill Prevention and Response Committee. He later took a position working with the Scientific Advisory Committee, managing the Council's long-term environmental monitoring program, and projects to study issues such as oil spill

dispersants, the toxicity of crude oil, and the social effects of oil spills on communities.

Prior to joining the Council, Banta witnessed the Exxon Valdez oil spill first hand as a Cordova fisherman and helped with the spill response, rescuing oiled wildlife. Banta was called upon over the years to advise other communities about oil spills. After the BP Deepwater Horizon spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, he visited that area, helping those dealing with the effects of the oil. That same year, he testified about how the Exxon spill affected him, his family, and his community to a U.S. Senate Committee who was looking into the effects of the BP disaster.

"Even though the faces changed over the years since the Council was formed, the one constant was Joe Banta," said Donna Schantz, executive director for the Council. "Joe not only gave advice to the oil industry and regulators, he was a mentor to anyone seeking to learn about environmental stewardship. I had the pleasure of working with Joe for the past 20 years and he will be missed."

## Valdez project manager Love takes over science programs



Banta's position has been filled by Valdez staff member Austin Love. Love has been the Council's manager for projects related to operations at the Valdez Marine Terminal for the past five years, working closely with the Council's Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring Committee. Love has a Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry from the University of San Francisco and a Master of Environmental Science and Management from the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Left: Love retrieves passive sampling devices (absorbent plastic strips) used to monitor the environment in Prince William Sound. Photo by Josh Miller.

## New project manager assistant in Anchorage

Hans Odegard has taken the position of project manager assistant, left vacant by Shawna Popovici.



Odegard took the Council's information booth to Cordova's Salmon Jam event this summer.

Odegard grew up in Eagle River, Alaska, and graduated from the University of Alaska Fairbanks with a degree in business administration. Hans has fished commercially out of Prince William Sound, worked in agriculture in Palmer, held various positions within the School of Management at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and worked as a social worker at Cook Inlet Tribal Council in Anchorage.

## COUNCIL MEETINGS

The Council meets three times annually. The January meeting is held in Anchorage, May in Valdez, and the September meeting is rotated among communities affected by the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

Upcoming meetings:

- September 19 & 20, 2019 in Kenai, Alaska
- January 23 & 24, 2020 in Anchorage, Alaska
- May 7 & 8, 2020 in Valdez, Alaska

More details are available on our website: [www.pwsrcac.org](http://www.pwsrcac.org)

Board meetings are open to the public, and an opportunity for public comments is provided at the beginning of each meeting.



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Community Corner:

## Transparency is key to preserving relationships in an era of mistrust

By **Betsi Oliver**

Outreach Coordinator

Clean Pacific, a conference for the oil spill prevention and response community, added a track this year with the theme of “communications.” I attended the conference to host the Council’s booth. In sessions and conversations throughout the event I heard one message coming through, loud and clear, about community relationships and trust:

The key to effective communications during a crisis, such as an oil spill, is long-term community relationships. The key to meaningful community relationships is trust. This trust is built on transparency, listening, and engaging key stakeholders in planning and preparation well in advance of any crisis.

The liaison from Canadian pipeline company Trans Mountain, for example, said that their practice of radical transparency met resistance in the company at first.

Over time, however, it has proven effective. Sometimes the public misconstrues their messages, but with clarification and mutual dialogue, the community relationships are growing stronger.

This echoed a similar message I heard at an International Association for Public Participation training a few months earlier. Presenters wrestled with how we engage and inform communities in this era of mistrust. Businesses, government, and media are no longer regarded as reliable sources of accurate information. Even non-profits are losing credibility with the public. The recommendations were to seek deep ties to community members, to listen, and to share information, good or bad, transparently.

This sounds like old news to us. From the beginning, the Council fostered deep community ties, transparency, public engagement, and long-term relationships. Our interactions with industry, regulators, and our communities are based on science and the best interest of all stakeholders. We are a unique partner for industry, giving them a platform to provide information, answer questions, and listen to stakeholders, which helps them also develop long-term relationships.

The Council is ahead of the curve. We were created in part to be a model for the development of similar citizen oversight organizations across the country, so it makes sense. Our knowledgeable and active



**Betsi Oliver**  
Outreach  
Coordinator



Volunteers worked with staff to spread the Council’s message at the Alaska Forum on the Environment in Anchorage this year. From left: Robert Archibald, representative from City of Homer; Brooke Taylor, director of communications; Jerry Brookman, member of the Council’s Oil Spill Prevention and Response Committee; Patience Andersen Faulkner, representative from Cordova District Fishermen United; and Betsi Oliver.

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Above: Robert Beedle, board representative from the City of Cordova, got to check out the view from the captain's seat during a May tour of one of Edison Chouest Offshore's new escort tugs. Photo by Brooke Taylor.

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volunteers continually reinforce our deep community ties by sharing the message of who we are and what we do, and by listening to their member entities' concerns.

Sharing the Council's mission and message can be fun. Already this year volunteers have mentored teens, judged an ocean sciences quiz bowl, rode bikes in Washington D.C. between visits with legislators, eaten dim sum together, told stories about their lives' impacts, shared photos, rode a Southwest Alaska Pilots Association boat, toured the pipeline terminal, and more.

Outreach by our volunteers is also effective. Our best social media responses come from posts that show our volunteers having fun while spreading our mission. The Council is most effective

at sharing its message when volunteers connect us to their local community's happenings, spread the word, and bring their friends. When a Council volunteer who is a trusted member of the community shares an informed message, others listen and believe it more readily.

I'm proud to be a part of this Council that has led the field in cultivating community relationships, transparency, and trust for almost three decades.

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Below: Staff and members of the Council's Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring Committee toured the terminal this summer to see certain projects of interest. From left: Steve Goudreau, committee member; Joe Lally, director of programs; Austin Love, project manager; and committee members Pat Tomco and Harold Blehm.



## New buoy now streaming weather conditions

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Valdez Duck Flats.

In 1994, the tanker Eastern Lion spilled 8,400 gallons of North Slope crude oil into Port Valdez. Oil reached the Duck Flats and hatchery before protective boom was in place.

After that spill, changes were made to the Valdez Marine Terminal contingency plan to ensure that protections were deployed quickly. A rapid-decision tool, called a “matrix,” was created to help responders assess when to deploy protective boom to the Solomon Gulch Hatchery and Valdez Duck Flats during the critical early hours of a response. In 2017, the matrix was modified, and the Council, the City of Valdez, Valdez Fisheries Development Association, and Prince William Sound

Aquaculture Corporation appealed that decision.

Earlier this year, the parties agreed to stay the appeal in lieu of a collaborative workgroup process. The workgroup’s goal is to reach consensus on how to ensure the protection of the Solomon Gulch Hatchery and Valdez Duck Flats. The buoys will provide scientific data to help the workgroup better understand how spilled oil will move in Port Valdez. This knowledge will help determine the timing for deploying protective boom.

### Second buoy monitors Valdez Duck Flats



A second buoy has been deployed near the Valdez Duck Flats to monitor conditions in that location. The second buoy has been made possible by partnerships with Prince William Sound Science Center, the City of Valdez, and Valdez Fisheries Development Association.

### Buoy locations:



Above: The Valdez Duck Flats is designated as a “environmentally sensitive area” in spill contingency planning. This is a photo from the geographic response strategy, or GRS, for the Valdez Duck Flats. A GRS is an oil spill response plan tailored to protect a specific sensitive area from impacts following a spill. These plans are developed for locations that have been pre-identified as particularly sensitive to an oil spill due to their biological or cultural importance, or areas that would be difficult to clean up or remediate.

Below: The map shows the locations of the two sensitive areas of concern. The hatchery is a little over two miles from the terminal and the flats are approximately four miles.

-  Area of concern that is particularly sensitive to spilled oil
-  Location of new weather buoy



Access weather conditions from the new buoys and all of the Council’s weather resources: [www.bit.ly/PWSbuoys](http://www.bit.ly/PWSbuoys)

## Upgrades at Valdez Marine Terminal

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- installation of new hydrocarbon sensors;
- move from manual operations to automated, logic control-based operation of the facility;
- installation of an automated ventilation and incinerator system that would turn on before hydrocarbon gas levels in the system become unsafe.

In general, many of these upgrades were made to improve the safe operations of the facility. Replacing the carbon steel piping with stainless steel and fiberglass reinforced plastic reduces the risk of an oil spill because corrosion rates are much lower in the new piping materials. The move to automated, logic control-based facility operation is intended to reduce the risk of a spill or another problem due to human error. The installation of multiple, more accurate hydrocarbon sensors improves monitoring of hydrocarbon gas throughout the system, helping facility operators ensure concentrations of those gases stay in a safe range. Finally, the installation of the automated ventilation and incinerator system keeps people out of harm's way in the event of a buildup of hydrocarbon gas and routes that gas for destruction in an incinerator before concentrations become unsafe. Currently, such ventilation is done by sending technicians out to turn on the soon-to-be replaced manual ventilation system.

Using better piping materials, reducing the chance of operator error, and decreasing people's exposure to hazardous situations are all ways that the multiyear upgrades to the facility should result in safer operations.

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## Strong regulations result of hard lessons

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that some may not fully understand or appreciate the legacy they have been entrusted to protect.

After the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill, the Alaska legislature created the Alaska Oil Spill Commission to study the event and propose changes that would minimize chances for recurrence of a similar disaster. One of their recommendations was that, "The nation and the state need strong, alert regulatory agencies fully funded to scrutinize and safeguard the shipment of oil." The Commission found that starting in 1981 there was a dramatic decline in regulatory oversight that contributed to the spill.

Industry has been able to meet or exceed current regulatory requirements and has demonstrated a commitment to the environment through safer operations. New technologies and improvements based on lessons learned have been added to the system in Prince William Sound to further enhance preparedness. Most of these reforms are costly, yet it is unreasonable to claim now, decades later, that existing requirements are too onerous on industry. Any perceived financial burden to industry should be weighed against the devastation and enormous burden another major oil spill would place on the people, fish, wildlife, and environment of our region.

The State of Alaska should take pride in the world-class oil spill prevention and response system created for crude oil storage and transportation in Prince William Sound. Maintaining this high level of vigilance is of paramount importance to keeping oil transportation safe. The Council continues to raise awareness and provide reasonable and justified resistance to changes that could weaken existing protections to avoid sliding back into complacency.